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STRATEGY RESEARCH **PROJECT** 

ONE COMMAND, IS IT ENOUGH?

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JEFFREY T. KAPPENMAN **United States Army** 

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## USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

# ONE COMMAND, IS IT ENOUGH?

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U.S. Army War College CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The intent of this SRP is to critically review the Army's current one command policy implemented in 1995. What are the implications of this policy and does it best serve our Army by training our junior leaders for the future. Finally, as our Army transforms what can be done by the Chief to improve the training of our future leaders.

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## ONE COMMAND, IS IT ENOUGH?

As the vision of *Force XXI Operations* describes, the Army has proceeded on two tracks to achieve its vision of Transformation. The first is the development of the enabling technology to achieve digitized battlespace awareness, and the second is to develop mature, experienced, and highly skilled leaders who can use this newfound awareness to achieve a level of performance that far outdistances what was possible before.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, since the publication of *Force XXI Operations*, the Army has refined its vision for what the future battlefield might require of its junior officers. One of the Army's spokesmen for leadership development during the Transformation, Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege, has written "doctrine, training and experience will be even more important in the future."<sup>2</sup>

"Company commands are becoming increasingly important. They ought to have served seven or eight years' experience in a battalion before taking command because they need to gain experience to be truly effective. Also, the Army must conduct a more thorough assessment and selection process, choosing only the best and leaving the officers in position longer"<sup>3</sup>

But, in fact, the trends since the publication of that vision are markedly different. If one looks closely at officer effectiveness, as indicated by separate trends in experience, skill, and quality among junior officers since 1994, there is significant reason to be concerned.

# **EXPERIENCE AND PERFORMANCE TRENDS**

Over the decade of the nineties, the Army developed a definite trend towards promoting junior officers with less and less time in service. As Table 1 indicates below, the "pin-on" time for lieutenants to be promoted to captain has dropped by about a year since the mid 1990's. To enable this decrease, the Army shortened the length of time an officer spent as a second lieutenant from 24 months to 18 months in 1997 (it could not reduce the time an officer spent as a first lieutenant because US Code Title 10 requires officers to spend 24 months in that grade).

YEAR	PIN ON TIME TO CPT	
PRE-1994	54 MONTHS	
1994	48 MONTHS	
2000	42 MONTHS	

## TABLE 1 PIN ON TIME TO CAPTAIN

For Army officers, as with any other profession, experience is the "active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill." What happens when

officers move rapidly through the ranks is that they miss out on the opportunities to fully learn the skills that should be the foundation of further development. Practical experience "critical to establishing a strong basic foundation that can grow, with additional practice, into expertise." This is particularly true for junior officers, as they have no basis upon which to rely to compensate for missed training opportunities. Senior lieutenants and junior captains leave their units and attend branch-specific schooling at their Captains Career Course enroute to a new assignment at much earlier points in their development than ever before. This lends itself to less experienced and tested officers serving as today's company commanders.<sup>8</sup>

Not only do they spend fewer years as junior officers, but also trends indicate that each year contains fewer training opportunities than the one before. A RAND study, "Keeping the Warfighting Edge: An Empirical Analysis of Army Officers' Tactical Expertise Over the 1990s", released in 2000, addressed this decline in junior officer experience over the period of 1990 to 1998. The study headed up by Maren Leed concluded that there has been declines in the amount of time junior officers spend in developmental positions (such as platoon leaders), coupled with a simultaneous decline in annual training opportunities. For example, junior armor officers were conducting nearly 50 percent less live-fire training and 50 percent less maneuver training annually in 1998 than they had in 1990. As a result, their tactical foundation "became based on a narrower set of experiences than had been the case in the past."

#### **OFFICER SKILL**

In January 1999, the Inspector General (IG) briefed the service's senior leaders that there was a continuing trend of units arriving at the combat training centers (CTCs) at a declining level of combat skill proficiency. This simply points out that leaders and units are unable to execute routine tasks at the same level of competence than comparable leaders and units had inthe past. The Army leadership, reportedly, had been well aware of this decline in skill "for several years." 13

Almost immediately after the Inspector General released his report, several senior Army officers and non-commissioned officers testified about skill degradation in front of the House Services subcommittees on military readiness. These soldiers testified about the declining proficiency of units at the various combat training centers. Some stated, that "units are having trouble conducting some of the basic combat fundamentals." The most compelling testimony came from Colonel John D. Rosenberger, the commander of the NTC Opposing Force and

widely respected and experienced in NTC operations. COL Rosenberger testified that (emphasis added):

- The performance and combat readiness of brigade combat teams...has
   substantially declined the past 5 years.
- Commanders, staffs, and soldiers at every level—platoon to brigade—display a
  decreasing level of knowledge, skill, and ability to plan, prepare, conduct, and
  sustain combat operations.
- There has been a steep decline in the ability of battalions and brigades to...defeat the OPFOR.
- Commanders and staffs, for the most part, are not adequately trained.
- Battalion and brigade commanders display a declining level of tactical competence, battlefield intuition, and mastery of the science and art of warfighting.<sup>15</sup>

The low skill of training units does not allow them to fully maximize their training opportunities at the CTCs. As a result "many commanders come away from their training with an unrealistically high assessment of their individual and unit capabilities because they think that their units performed well, when serious unit weaknesses might have been uncovered had training conditions not been adjusted to reduce exercise complexity." This trend has the additional side effects of producing commanders at all levels who do not know that they are not fully competent, and therefore are poor trainers to the junior officers they are charged to develop. All of this results in a ever growing and continuing cycle of decay that produces leaders of ever decreasing skill. More frightening, the officers involved are they themselves unaware of this decay of expertise. <sup>17</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the RAND report *Keeping the Warfighting Edge* also documented a series of trends including decreasing training opportunities, personnel turbulence, and decreasing skills in unit trainers that indicate a weakening of the tactical foundation of junior Infantry and Armor officers over the last half of the nineties.<sup>18</sup> The report further discussed a widening "tactical gap" in junior officer skill, which was the product of these factors and "if not addressed, is likely to persist and could grow even larger."

Now that we've reviewed just some of the issues of officer competence and experience, let us move forward with a look at OPMS XXI to see if it provides any answers for the problems the Army officer corps is suffering.

## **OPMS XXI - THE CASE FOR CHANGE**

This report is about the need for fundamental change in the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS). The focal point of the study has been the future, not the present. While there are fundamental issues of pressing concern today, the OPMS XXI Task Force believes that they must be resolved in the context of developing an officer corps that will meet the challenges of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century---to lead Army XXI in mastering the capabilities and functions outlined in Army Vision 2010; Joint Vision 2010; and DA PAM 100-XX, Force XXI Institutional Army Redesign. In short, OPMS must address the needs of the future as well as correct the problems existing today.<sup>20</sup>

Chief of Staff of the Army, Dennis J. Reimer convened the Officer Personnel Management System XXI Task Force in July 1996 to review and update OPMS, and as necessary make the required changes to develop officers to best meet the challenges in the 2ft Century. There had been many changes affecting officer career paths and General Reimer rightfully put together some of the best minds in the Army to study those changes and adopt a more effective career development process to offset the effects of:

- The post Cold War drawdown
- The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986
- The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act of 1990
- Title(s) VII and XI legislation for active component/reserve component (AC/RC) support in 1992 and 1993<sup>21</sup>

While the OPMS XXI Study was a broad examination of officer development it focused primarily on improving branch qualification opportunities for field grade officers in the rank of Major. Arguably, company command is the most important professional development assignment of company grade officers and if this is so, what does the OPMS XXI survey offer for addressing the lack of company commander experience. Remember the challenge of the survey was "to create an evolutionary path for an officer corps of an Army that does not yet exist." It should be noted that this particular survey addressed only the active component, although the Task Force did consider some limited AC/RC integration issues.

The survey considered the following seven criteria for the officer personnel system to be fully effective:

- An environment that supports and promotes the Army ethic and the Army's broad, enduring values
- Professional and personal development, including regular, candid feedback

- The professional satisfaction of making a meaningful contribution to the Army and the Nation
- The opportunity to work in jobs that the officer and the Army value
- Credible opportunities for advancement and other rewards
- Adequate compensation, recognition, and prestige for competent job performance
- Reasonable stability, predictability, job security, and freedom from serious concern about post-retirement financial future<sup>23</sup>

With this as the backdrop what did the survey say? First, "to attain maximum organizational performance from the organizations they lead, officers must be given adequate time, education, and **developmental experience** (emphasis added) as individuals to become outstanding leaders."<sup>24</sup> Additionally the survey further suggested that, "leadership teams will need to spend a significant amount of time together to develop their collective skills, grow as a learning organization, and build cohesion so that the organization—as a whole—will be more effective."<sup>25</sup> More importantly the survey team reasoned that the "Army of the future will need world-class **operational specialist** (emphasis added) who are expert at warfighting, capable of operating across the full spectrum of military operations, and competent at integrating Total Army assets in joint and combined operations."<sup>26</sup>

I agree with the above statements, but my question is this, if these were our stated objectives in 1996 what has the Army done or changed to make any of this happen? As we all unfortunately know the answer is little. Who are world-class operational specialists, and what are the requirements to become one? How much time is required to build competent leadership teams? I don't know, but does the following example check the box. The officer who will take command of the first operational IBCT this summer has acquired the following troop time; 12 months of platoon leader time, 24 months of company command, and 24 months of battalion command over a 20 plus year career. Does this meet anyone's idea of an "operational specialist"?

In concert with the above statements the survey team asked three important questions:

- Does the current system give officers the operational experience they need to become competent and effective field-grade commanders
- Does the Army develop officers who possess functional area specialty expertise and experience

 How is individual officer experience contributing to the development of competent, cohesive, and well-integrated leadership organizations across the Army<sup>27</sup>

Using feedback from the CGSC class of 2000, lets examine just some of their thoughts on how the Army and OPMS XXI are serving career professional development needs:

- Risk aversion has become a military cultural thing; commanders are not willing to take risks (and subordinates know it)
- The Army's senior leadership has a definite credibility problem
- Not enough time to really DO the BQ jobs
- LTs not given enough time in actual troop-leading, leader developmental positions
- Lack of empowerment for captains/company commanders. Too many decisions taken out of their hands. This is closely connected to perceived inability to take risks and fail (zero defect mentality)
- Company command experience is key impression for opting for military career. If it is negative, fewer company commanders will elect to stay
- Not enough company commander time; system pushes officers to command as junior CPTs so there's lots of time left for staff and other jobs like AC/RC. Many branches are adamant about no 2<sup>nd</sup> commands
- Too many back to back non-troop assignments<sup>28</sup>

These sentiments of only a hand full of officer responses were repeatedly echoed throughout the entire survey. So now, in many aspects the Army has its answers to the three questions above. And it's not a rosy picture for either the senior leadership or for those young officers that are faithfully making a career in today's Army. But let's go back to the all-encompassing OPMS XXI Survey and review what the survey team felt was key to officer development.

## OFFICER DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Since 1947 when it was decided the Army officer career path would be an up or out system along with 20-year retirement, it was also a system by which officers would be generalist or a "jack of all trades." But over time and by closer examination it would appear that previous versions of OPMS would be incapable of meeting the needs of our Transformation. The OPMS XXI Study was to improve the warfighting effectiveness of officers and thereby increasing the readiness of the units they served in. "A fundamental premise of the study was that building

combat-effective battalion and brigade commanders is the focal point of officer branch development for most branches. Two absolutely crucial pieces in the development of effective battalion and brigade commanders are company level command and the critical branch qualifying jobs in units at the 04 level."<sup>29</sup>

When the survey team issued their significant findings, lack of company command time was not among them. They did see officer experience in key BQ jobs decreasing. They also described an Army that was not producing deeply experienced specialists. Additionally, and quite interestingly they also felt that increasing complexity of needed skills and the shorter shelf life of modern technology required not less but more frequent assignments and longer tours.

Among their conclusions the board found that; we must reduce the number of authorizations to a number that can be filled, through longer and frequent tours reduce the assignment demands on individual officers so as to give them more time to focus on the key skills they need to possess, and finally provide "selected" officers with more branch-qualifying time in key battalion and brigade assignments—all to better develop future battalion and brigade commanders.

Unfortunately, the ever-increasing demands placed on our Captains keep them from receiving/completing the goals of what the OPMS XXI Survey strive to achieve. In fact, the Task Force felt that the fundamental developmental assignment patterns and goals for company grade officers are about right. And thus when the board put forward their "revolutionary" answer to officer professional development the oft over tasked and under developed grade of Captain was largely overlooked. It would be hard to find a time in the Army's history that so much has been expected of Captains yet so little real preparation is given. It is also important to note that today's company commander is tomorrow's battalion commander. It's not so surprising to see why the Army today has such a dangerously large exodus of Captains.

Concurrently with the apparent declines in tactical developmental opportunities, changes in the national security environment and the Army's failing to address these changes in terms of a coherent and lasting officer professional develop plan to overcome the growing "tactical gap" of our company grade officers they are left to fend for themselves.

## OTHER INFLUENCES SHAPING THE U.S. OFFICER CORPS

The Army has considerable experience with a variety of surveys beginning with the Study of Professionalism. It is the use of data, not the gathering of it that has been the primary flaw in the Army's survey efforts.

-- LTG Walter Ulmer, USA (ret)

Captains and officers in general do not join the Army to serve in positions away from troops. Yet, in today's Army that's exactly what happens. And now after the implementation of OPMS XXI the greatest burdens of Goldwater-Nichols, service to the 3-Rs, and congressionally mandated support to the Reserve Component falls squarely on those officers in the Operations Career Field. They also comprise the sole career field from which our future commanders come. The AC/RC tasking is particularly devastating. Prior to the implementation timeframe of Title VII and XI in 1992 and 1993, Captains were free to serve for extended periods in operational line units gaining invaluable experience to be used later as battalion and brigade commanders. Many officers were allowed to command not only once but twice. But now, with the above mandates Captains arrive at their one and only operational tour immediately following the Captains Career Course. The pressures are extreme. Brigade and Battalion commanders know that once any Captain completes his or her company command tour the more important "needs of the Army" must be met, and the officer is immediately reassigned far, far away from troops. To offset this situation commanders often "leave" Captains in staff jobs at both the Brigade and Battalion level to gain the experience they should have had in company command. It's not the best solution but the only one they can control. Eventually the officer works his way down to a company and a 12-15 month command tour takes place. And most unfortunately, the dynamics of these actions lead us to the nexus of pervasive attitudes ravaging much of our Army such as micro-management, zero defects, and risk aversion.

#### **COMPANY COMMAND TODAY**

Today, the Army allows a second command only under the most limiting of circumstances. The following information was taken from the Infantry Officer Homepage. Branch qualification for infantry captains consists of graduation from any Captains Career Course and successful completion of at least 12 months of company command in either a TOE or TDA unit. The optimum company command time is 18 months. PERSCOM's Infantry Branch will fully support the CSAs guidance on second company commands. According to the CSA's guidance, authorized second company commands consist of:

- Mechanized Infantry Battalion HHC Commands
- Division HHC Commands
- Long Range Surveillance Detachments
- 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment Company Commands
- Ranger Training Brigade Company Commands
- Recruiting Company Commands

A question one may ask is why do the commands above merit more experienced officers than the majority of those remaining? Even if an officer were allowed a second command, no one by CSA policy can command for a total of more than 24 months. Currently only about 15 percent of all Captains are given a second command. And if you are one of the lucky few, you are not allowed more than 12 months in either command. This policy would seem to be out of synch with what all, to include the OPMS XXI Survey team, have stated as what our officers require for professional development for warfighting in the future. But let's go back to the Infantry Homepage and find out what post company command Captains have in store for them as far as professionally enhancing billets.

Branch qualified captains are a critical resource to the Army, and the infantry must fully support those requirements. Key assignments for branch-qualified captains include:

- USAIS Small Group Instructor
- CTC Observer/Controller
- Project Warrior
- AC/RC duty
- USAREC
- ROTC TAC Officers
- OCS TAC Officers
- USMA TAC Officers

The assignments above are not what bright, motivated young officers aspire to do, at least not for most of their company grade years. If the average Captain spends seven or eight years in grade and on average 12-15 months in company command, and only one operational tour with troops, that leaves a great deal of time for those other critical assignments mentioned above. One has to ask, does this best serve the officer, his unit, or the Army? Is this what the OPMS XXI Survey intended? Does this developmental path create the operational specialist we need as battalion commanders on the battlefield of the 21st Century?

The present CSA's policy on company command hinders some branches more than others. For a case in point, lets look at the aviation branch. Aviation is largely a very technical field and requires much money and time of the Army to train just one aviator. But as pointed out earlier LTs are receiving less time as platoon leaders, and as Captains, all officers are spending more time on staffs and less time in line unts honing their skills. Not to mention learning hard and fast rules on how to train their subordinates, or interact with enlisted soldiers or Noncommissioned officers, or be part of a trained and ready combat crew or platoon. For aviators, today's Army is particularly short on money to fly and fix aircraft. In addition ammo accounts are

not stocked to the levels of even 15 years ago. Flight time equates to actual experience and average flight times among officers in aviation are on a downward trend. Do we really want battalion commanders with less than 1,000 flight hours making critical decisions on complex tactical exercises when they themselves have never trained or participated in such exercises in the past? This is rapidly becoming a dangerous pastime in aviation units and one that has seen adverse results.

# OTHER ILLS OF THE ONE COMMAND POLICY

It is my belief that the current one command policy has led directly to some of the greatest ills afflicting our forces today. Using *Joel Barker's Implication Wheel* I see many of today's worst problems developing the second and third order effects of Captains only commanding once. If we place the one command policy in the middle as the starting point what are the second and third order effects of such a policy.

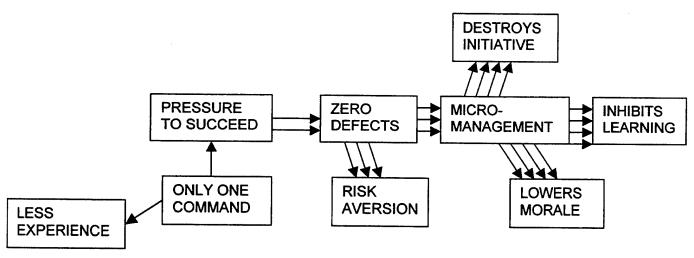


FIGURE 1 JOEL BARKER IMPLICATION WHEEL FOR A ONE COMMAND POLICY

When a young company commander's entire chain of command knows that any one event could be the one and only time he will perform it in command, that event will become critical to the success of his time in command. This leads to a greater pressure to succeed on the officer involved and his chain of command. Since we live in an "up or out" promotion system, failures no matter how slight often ruin an officers chance for promotion. Typically, this is even more the case in crucial positions such as company command or as an executive officer or operations officer. This environment is readily conducive to growing a zero defects culture. Survey after survey demonstrates that this culture is pervasive in our Army today. Mark R. Lewis defines the

problem in this fashion, "zero defects contributes to a junior officers lack of experience as commanders limit risk in training to prevent mistakes that could inhibit their promotion. This then drives a micromanagement-inexperience loop. When junior officers are closely supervised, and risk in training is limited, they are not free to experiment and fully learn lessons. Senior officers must then compensate for that lack of experience through more restrictive control measures, limiting freedom of action, and using less taxing training events.<sup>30</sup>

One could find the problem of zero defects both subtler in nature and more adverse to the combat readiness of front line units. Operational commanders won't admit that they are contributing to the zero defects environment by participating and thus burdening the entire process with micromanagement. And by removing any chance for errors or mistakes that could result in the injury of soldiers, the chain of command actively reduces the training proficiency of the unit and thus along with it the combat readiness of the organization. As the stakes rise these two problems continue to grow until they become almost one in the same. Lewis describes the process as perpetuating each other. He correctly states, "senior officers micromanage junior officers to insure they make no mistake that might endanger the supervisors career. Living under a microscope, junior officers resort to micromanagement of their subordinates as a matter of survival. This then leads to alack of trust as junior officers feel they are closely managed by their senior officers only as a means to protect that officer's career."

So we now see that micromanagement travels both up and down a specified chain of command. As training opportunities decrease, as commissioned officers spend less time as platoon leaders, as Captains only have one opportunity for command the opportunity for chain of command involvement only becomes greater thus increasing the pressure to succeed. The unfortunate results include commanders at all levels inviting themselves into a subordinate commander's opportunity to grow and gain the full experience of command all in the name of "developing" the commander involved, and protecting their own careers. This kind of micromanagement occurs most frequently from battalion down to company commander. Hand in hand with micromanagement, zero defects will continue to grow until the Army sets in place a system where company commanders have more opportunities to perform their training, not less. Finally, a risk averse population of officers who have taken the least amount of risk to get promoted will one day be the battalion or brigade commander who without having had the actual opportunity himself at some point earlier in his career will be forced by circumstances to make decisions he is not professionally trained or capable of making. Is this what our soldiers

deserve? Is this what our nation expects? What's the priority? Army publications say warfighting, is it? Where can answers be found?

## **LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS**

Today's problems come from yesterday's solutions.<sup>32</sup>

If ever there was a learning organization it would have to be the United States Army. No other professional organization has been around as long or has successfully navigated so many dangerous waters. To do that, the Army has been able to move with change, not fight it, but accept it as a way to achieving the successes this nation has come to depend upon. Yet despite all those changes in tactics, Presidents, organizational changes, and strategic landscapes, we have ably managed to keep those inherit qualities required for service in a democracy such as loyalty, honor, and commitment. We've remembered the lessons from the past, incorporated them with our movement forward and balanced both to be the respected and envied land force of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In any organization attempting to be a learning organization there is always room for improvement. In fact, according to Peter M. Senge author of *The Fifth Discipline*, we never reach a destiny in learning organizations, instead it is like life, it is about the journey. Senge goes on to define learning organizations as an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. He also believes that there are five "component technologies" that are converging to innovate learning organizations. These components will continually enhance their capacity to realize their highest aspirations.<sup>33</sup> I will briefly review these five components in an effort to discover areas where the Army may take advantage of opportunities for improving the command and developmental paths for Captains.

**Systems Thinking:** Senge writes that systems thinking is "a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us se how to change them effectively." It may be possible as the Army redesigns its own headquarters that a more holistic and synergistically feasible method for making personnel decisions could allow more troop time for Operations Career field officers thereby increasing experience and the combat readiness of line units.

**Personal Mastery:** Senge believes that, "personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively." This is something most would feel the Army does well, but

the real question is for how long. Do all of us have the same amount of commitment, the same amount of desire, the same amount zeal as the day we entered the Army. Do we as an institution fulfill the professional needs of our officers? Numerous surveys would say no. How many officers by the time they make Major are going through the motions in positions that others would desire but we as an institution decided they can't have. Going back to the OPMS XXI Survey it listed specifically what officers should expect of the Army. In part it stated,

- The professional satisfaction of making a meaningful contribution to the Army and the Nation
- The opportunity to work in jobs that the officer and the Army value
- Credible opportunities for advancement and other rewards
- Reasonable stability, predictability, job security, and freedom from serious concern about post-retirement financial failure<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately this feeling of opportunity lost, and career dissatisfaction begins at a much earlier period in officers than ever before. Before the post Cold War drawdown officers worried little about career opportunities, but since then and with the advent of information technology (internet) officers are bombarded 24/7 about where to be, and what to get along the way. This constant flow of information does less about informing and more to create a new class of dissatisfied officers than anything seen previously. Captains are at the front of this new wave. If not mentored properly they fall into the trap of careerism. Getting the next job becomes more important than the one you are in. The CSA's policy on one command only serves to perpetuate this notion. Company command becomes just a "ticket to be punched" no longer the privilege to lead America's sons and daughters. To them the Army promises much—essentially everything as highlighted above. We need to start matching our words with actions. One place to start would be with allowing those officers capable and willing to either stay in command longer and/or gain another chance to command. If we want their commitment we must show ours.

**Mental models:** Senge proposes that, "mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action." Mental models are all about making judgments, some accurate based on the situation and experience. Others inaccurate due to only a passing familiarity with the subject or person involved. A popular mental model alive and well in the Army is the judgment that non-resident grads from CGSC are "damaged goods" and therefore less deserving of plum branch qualifying assignments. In regards to Captains, a popular mental model is about officers who have commanded TDA units rather than TOE units are less capable, and therefore, have a

lower potential for higher service in the future. These cultural mores are so powerful they determine the haves from the have-nots. Again, the Army says one thing but delivers something else and in the process disenfranchises large portions of the officer population. These mental models along with many others must be eliminated from the thinking of the officer corps as well as assignment managers. One opportunity in command for Captains only reenforces today's idea that command can ruin a career and time in command should be kept to a minimum. Company commanders now only play a "prevent defense" or in other words perform in such a manner so as not to lose, for taking chances or accepting risk even in the pursuit of excellence is not tolerated. It is safer to function in the middle. Unfortunately, allowing mediocrity to be the standard for company commanders today only ensures the Army of tomorrow will have mediocre battalion commanders—re-enforcing what they know—play not lose.

Building Shared Vision: When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-to-familiar "vision statement"), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to.<sup>38</sup> The Army has many visions, but what is that enduring vision for what the Army asks of commanders. Ask many and you will likely receive many different answers. When aviation officers at their Captain Career Course ask why they are spending the majority of their time learning the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) instead of learning the ins and outs of company command the answer is, you are only going to command for a short amount of time, and all the rest of your time will be as a staff officer.<sup>39</sup> Is this, the Army's vision of what we want our commanders to strive for, a career of staff work, minimal troop time, and high stress with no tangible results? Captains are answering that question for us, and they are voting with their feet.

**Team Learning:** According to Senge, "team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. This is where "the rubber meets the road"; unless teams can learn, the organization cannot learn. <sup>40</sup> The point here is a subtle one, but an important one. The Army trains, learns, and succeeds in teams. The size of the "teams" may vary from squad to battalion but we all accept this fact of teamwork. As I've highlighted throughout this paper the Army is not offering junior leaders and their teammates enough opportunities to learn and therefore be successful.

Senge looks at the components above as *disciplines*. He defines disciplines as a developmental path for acquiring certain skills or competencies.<sup>41</sup> Putting these disciplines together into a tightly woven tapestry of assignment priorities, personnel management, and

competence imperatives requires the direction of a strategic leader. That leadership can only come from one officer.

#### **LEADING CHANGE**

Everyone in the Army has heard about Transformation, we see the commercials on TV, it is discussed at all our schools, and the Army Homepage has dedicated websites, yet with all of that information available, Transformation really means little to the majority of the Army. Isn't it more than the organizational changes of five maybe six Army brigades? Unfortunately, for many of us Transformation exists only on PowerPoint slides. However, I believe Transformation offers tremendous opportunities to make more than just TOE and doctrinal changes to a limited number of units. Transformation could provide the answer to many issues the Army has today. One such shortcoming is the continuing loss of tactical experiences and command opportunities in a "generalist" Army when all our written documents say we need operational "specialists" in the Objective force.

John P. Kotter discusses how to successfully lead organizations through change or transformation in his book *Leading Change*. His plan for action is broken down into an eight-step process or model. While I believe the book can provide insight into all of the Army's efforts for Transformation, I will spend time discussing just one, step six—generating short-term wins. Kotter writes in part, "running a transformation effort without serious attention to short-term wins is extremely risky." Short-term gains demonstrate that senior leadership is serious about transformation and in doing so produce tangible results for all the organization to see. While the TV commercials are good to see, and school discussions provide food for thought, and the websites can be constantly updated none of those demonstrate the tangible results the larger Army needs to see and believe there is a transformation actually taking place. Kotter outlines short-term wins as having at least three characteristics:

- It's visible; large numbers of people can see for themselves whether the result is real or just hype.
- It's unambiguous; there can be little argument over the call
- It's clearly related to the change effort.

My suggestion here is to shelf the one command only policy and under the Transformation effort offer lengthy commands, or better yet, additional commands to those officers who deserve and are worthy of such recognition. In doing so, the leadership would easily meet the three characteristics above. What's of particular importance is the first bullet. The greatest number of

officers and soldiers in our Army would benefit from the policy change. The time for change is now, Transformation is upon us, its time to match our rhetoric with action.

#### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

In light of an article I found in the 4 February 2002 *Army Times* I would posit that my recommendation is not far from what other senior leaders now are saying about officer professional development. General Paul J. Kern, commander of the Army Material Command, puts forth some interesting career patterns for officers under his purview. Essentially, his idea is to have Operational Support Career Field officers enter a separate career pattern. After branch qualification they would simply rotate between two positions, one teaching at West Point and the other working in Army research labs. Revolutionary, hardly, appropriate for his officers, maybe, but at least here is an officer willing to stand up and say something new and different about career paths. My question to his recommendation is this, why would this group of officers need to command at the company level at all. If they are the scientific specialists the Army needs how would company command enhance their career in the scientific field. He worries that officers of this caliber don't stay twenty years and so the Army losses these specialists before mandatory retirement. In doing so, the Army loses the significant investment of time and money required to develop these officers.

The same is happening in the Operations Career Field. Officers are promoted earlier than ever in answer to the exodus of Captains thus reducing developmental opportunities, commands are short and meant to be that way so as to avoid prematurely ruining long-term career possibilities. Don't expect many junior officers to demand second commands until we change the adverse cultural mores of micro-management, zero-defects, and risk aversion. They want to be with and lead soldiers; their ambition to succeed is at least as great as our own. But at every turn, every level, the Army minimizes troop time, confuses priorities, dampens desire. If we need officers for the 3 R's, and AC/RC, then let's develop specialists e.g., a separate career field for those positions. We can no longer say that warfighting is the primary responsibility of the officer corps and have officers with less than 30 months of total "green tab" time (15 months as a platoon leader and company commander) arriving at battalion command. This serves no ones best interest. Our soldiers and NCOs are facing enough challenges without adding the burden of short-term leadership. Rapid leadership changes at the company level and below undermines organizational readiness, battalion commanders with very limited and skewed operational experiences mask the very goal to which we all aspire; trained and ready units prepared for full-spectrum warfighting!

Not that it is much more than antidotal evidence but by reviewing the bio's of the senior officers on the faculty at the Army War College one can see the following trends. The Colonels on the faculty experienced significantly longer operational tours during their company grade years when compared to the averages today. For the most part these officers were the battalion commanders during Desert Storm. By all accounts a highly successful military operation. Can it be absolutely proven that today's experience starved junior officers will prove themselves less capable in battalion command? No, but why wonder? With America's ever increasing involvement into battling terror across the globe we should be striving in our most sincere and utmost fashion ensuring our leaders have the time and experiences necessary to fight in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In conclusion, my recommendation is simply to drop the current one command policy and instead allow those officers willing, and capable as judged by their brigade commanders to stay with troops and command again. This simple change could be highlighted as one of the changes falling under our Transformation effort. By allowing Captains to stay with troops and command repeatedly the pressures of command would fall to a more manageable level. I believe the benefits would be enormous; the adverse cultural mores of micro-management, zero-defects, and risk aversion would disappear as these officers stayed in command. If you know, your chain of command knows, and your subordinates know you are going to be around for awhile the pressure to succeed on every task is reduced or eliminated completely. This reduction I believe would most certainly do much in the removal of those adverse cultural mores affecting our Army. Our leadership teams would have the time necessary to bond and gain the developmental experience to become outstanding leaders. Additionally, this allows the time required to build cohesion so that our units as a whole will be more effective. And finally, we would meet our rhetoric in regards to filling the need for operational specialist who are the experts capable of operating across the entire spectrum of tomorrow's battlefield. In the final analysis, we must have aggressive, competent commanders who have been thoroughly tested by the rigors of command today, if we want the bold, experienced, risk-taking leaders that will lead the transformed Army of the future.

WORD COUNT = 6879

## **ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Ideas in this paragraph and those of the next nine paraphrased or taken from an excellent summary of officer effectiveness in draft version from Mark R. Lewis available from: <a href="http://www.geocities.com/lewismarkr/comment/effectveness.htm">http://www.geocities.com/lewismarkr/comment/effectveness.htm</a>; Internet; accessed 12 December 2001.
- <sup>2</sup> Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege and Major Jacob Biever, "Optimizing Future Battle Command Technologies," <u>Military Review Online</u>, March-April 1998; available from: <a href="http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/english/marapr98/czege.htm">http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/english/marapr98/czege.htm</a>; Internet; accessed 17 December 2001.
- <sup>3</sup> Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege and Major Jacob D. Biever, "Soldiers Not Technology Are the Key to Continued Superiority," <u>Army</u>, March 2001, 1.
- <sup>4</sup> See Jim Tice, "No Big Force-out for 1LT's, "<u>Army Times</u>, 28 February 1994; available from: <<a href="http://www.mco.com/mem/archieves/army/1994/at0228no.htm">http://www.mco.com/mem/archieves/army/1994/at0228no.htm</a>; Internet; accessed 17 December 2001. Jim Tice, "Let The Promotions Begin, "<u>Army Times</u>, 2 May 1994, 8. and Jim Tice, "Selection Board Picks 3,075 To Be Captains, "<u>Army Times</u>, 03 July 2000, 25.
  - <sup>5</sup> Jim Tice, "4072 Selected for Captain," <u>Army Times</u>, 08 November 1999, 18.
- <sup>6</sup> Excerpted from *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, Third Edition* 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.
- <sup>7</sup> Maren Leed, "Keeping the Warfighting Edge: An Empirical Analysis of Army Officers' Tactical Expertise Over the 1990s," <u>RAND Online</u>, unknown, available from: <<u>http://www.rand.org/publications/ RGSD/RGSD152.htm</u>>; Internet; accessed 18 December 2001.
  - <sup>8</sup> Lewis.
- <sup>9</sup> Mark Lewis, "Peacekeeping Deployments Erode Combat Readiness," <u>Army Times</u> 07 February 2000, 62.
  - <sup>10</sup> Leed, p. 48.
  - <sup>11</sup> Leed, p. 46.
  - <sup>12</sup> Sean D. Naylor, "Army IG Confirms Combat Woes," Army Times 15 February 1999, 20.
  - 13 lbid.
- <sup>14</sup> Sean D. Naylor, "Straight Shooters / Soldiers Sound Off On Readiness Woes," <u>Army Times</u>, 15 March 1999, 20.
- <sup>15</sup> Colonel John D. Rosenberger, "Military Readiness Subcommittee Hearings: Review Of Combat Training Center Operations, "<u>House Armed Services Committee: Schedules and Transcripts 1999 [online]</u>, 26 February 1999 available from:
  <a href="http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has05030.000/has057030">http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/security/has05030.000/has057030</a> Of htm>; Internet; accessed 17 December 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Full training Benefits From Army's Combat Training Centers Are Not Being Realized (Washington DC: United States General Accounting Office, September 1999), 16.
<sup>17</sup> Lewis.
<sup>18</sup> Leed 28. Summarized from Leeds writings.
<sup>19</sup> Ibid.
<sup>20</sup> OPMS XXI Final Report, undated; available from < <u>www.army.mil/adsxxi/opms</u> <u>xxi/smartbook/Final Report</u> >; Internet; accessed 17 December 2001, p 1-1.
<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 1-3.
<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 1-6
<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 3-5/6.
<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 4-3.
<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 4-3.
<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 4-3.
<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 4-4.
<sup>28</sup> "Chief of Staff of the Army's Leadership Survey", undated available from <a href="http://www.d-n-i.net/FCS">http://www.d-n-i.net/FCS</a> Folder/leadership comments.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 Jan 02.
<sup>29</sup> OPMS XXI Final Report, 4-10.
<sup>30</sup> Mark R. Lewis, untitled draft paper used with the permission of the author concerning Captain attrition in the US Army, Washington D.C., 17 December 2001, 14.
<sup>31</sup> Ibid.
<sup>32</sup> Peter M. Senge, <u>The Fifth Discipline</u> (Currency Doubleday; New York, 1990), 57.
<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 7.
<sup>34</sup> lbid.
<sup>35</sup> Ibid.
<sup>36</sup> OPMS XXI Final Report, 3-6.
<sup>37</sup> The Fifth Discipline, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> This para-phrased quote came from an instructor and student exchange at Ft. Rucker, January 2001.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> The Fifth Discipline, 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> John P. Kotter, <u>Leading Change</u> (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 119.

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